

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter encompasses the introduction of the study which covers background of study, research questions, aims of study, scope of study, research methodology, significance of study, clarification of key terms and organization of study.

1.1 Background of Study

Diary of A Wimpy Kid written by Jeff Kinney is a young adult novel which has been getting attention from young adults lately. Presented with humor and jokes, this novel tells about the life of a middle school student at 21st century in America. In relation to a survey done by Clark and Foster (as cited in Clark and Rumbold, 2006, p.15) which reveals that “when young adult readers were asked what types of material they were reading outside class, magazine, website, text message, newspapers – fiction, comic, humor or jokes novel, emerged as the most popular reading choice.”, *Diary of A Wimpy Kid* has carefully captured the criteria of popular young adult reading materials. It is proven by the nine series books and movies publication of adaption since 2007. *Diary of A Wimpy Kid* has also been nominated as the one of top ten Amazon’s adolescence books best seller in 2012 (Desk, 2012). In relation to this, Moore (2011) states that “*Diary of A Wimpy Kid* is not only a hit series of young adult books and a hit movie with a sequel but also it is considered as a phenomenon.” (p.1). Interestingly, the phenomenon of *Diary of A Wimpy Kid* also occurs in Indonesia. It is proven by a presence of Bahasa Indonesia translated series of this novel and a presence of a fan site named *Wimpy Kid Indonesia* or @WimpyKidINA in twitter which has more than a thousand followers.

Seeing the fact that *Wimpy Kid Indonesia* has many readers, it implies that the success of this novel cannot be separated from the readers. The readers of this novel may be in a variety of ages, however, middle school readers are the interesting readers. It is because middle school readers are what Iser (as cited in Schmid, 2013) called as the implied readers. This notion is supported by Booth who believes that implied readers are the intended group of readers of a text. Moreover, they are also categorized as young adult readers. They can be

considered as a special group of readers because they are in a stage between children and adult in which they start to think more critically than younger children do (Kiefer, 1997).

As young adults and implied readers of Jeff Kinney's *Diary of A Wimpy Kid*, some of the middle school readers at *Wimpy Kid Indonesia* read this novel in English version. Interestingly, they even do some group discussions around the jokes reflected on the novel. Considering this situation, a question might appear on how middle school readers of *Wimpy Kid Indonesia* read English version of Jeff Kinney's *Diary of A Wimpy Kid* considering it uses foreign language and it conveys different humor and jokes. To answer such question, it is necessary to reveal the way they make meaning on the story. Thus, middle school readers' reading activity can be traced and the category of readers can be found. Furthermore, how middle school articulate their thought, idea and feelings on the text can also be revealed.

Research on stance of reading activity is mostly referred to as reader response approach. As one of the main reader response theorists, Rosenblatt (1987) believes that the text should not be treated as a primary focus, but the readers are. The reason is because it is not the text that can define meaning but meaning can be derived from transactional reading by involving a reader and the text. To figure out how transaction is carried out, Langer (1991) believes that it can be traced by examining how readers use envisionment in four stages—"being out and stepping into envisionment, being in and moving through envisionment, stepping back and rethinking what one knows, and stepping out and objectifying the experience" (p.226) and by involving what Garrison and Hynds (1991, p.259) called as "readers' ability in evocating and reflecting on the text".

Considering the explanation above, the study is specifically designed firstly to portray how middle school readers make meaning on the story in Jeff Kinney's *The Diary of A Wimpy Kid* by using Langer's (1991) making meaning process. Second is to investigate what categories of reader they are by using categories of readers proposed by Garrison and Hynds (1991) and the meaning behind it. The previous studies related young adult readers have been conducted (See Wall (1996); Purcell-Gates (1991); Kriswanto (2012)). However, this study focuses on the specific readers of a fan site and their categorization of readers.

1.2 Research Questions

There were three questions that were answered in this research:

1. How do middle school readers make meaning of Jeff Kinney's *The Diary of A Wimpy Kid*?
2. To what kinds of categories are they categorized?
3. What meaning can be derived from this?

1.3 Aim of Study

The aims of this study were as follows:

1. To portray how middle school readers make meaning of Jeff Kinney's *The Diary of A Wimpy Kid*.
2. To investigate the categories of readers of middle school readers in *Wimpy Kid Indonesia*.
3. To figure out the meaning of these findings.

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study discusses the way middle school readers make meaning of Jeff Kinney's *The Diary of A Wimpy Kids* through written responses, questionnaires and interviews. The readers are members of a fan group named *Wimpy Kids Indonesia*. The scope of the study is limited to the sentences of the readers found in the written responses, questionnaires and interview transcripts.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study uses the descriptive-qualitative case study research method. In terms of subject of the study, this study involves six middle school readers of *Wimpy Kid Indonesia* by using purposive sampling. To follow purposive sampling, this study uses two criteria of selections. The selections are divided into age and region factors. In terms of collecting the data, this study uses written response, questionnaire, and interview. Meanwhile in analyzing the data, this study uses Langer's (1991) making meaning process and Garrison and Hynds' (1991) categorization of readers.

1.6 Significance of Study

This study is significant in regard to identifying the way middle school students make meaning of a novel. It is expected to lead middle school students in articulating their feeling and thought on literary works. Furthermore, the result of study is also expected to give contribution and inputs for development of young adult literature in Indonesia in particular and for those who are interested in investigating reader response.

1.7 Clarification of Key Terms

In order to comprehend the notions underlying the title of this study paper, some terms are clarified as follows:

1. **Reader response criticism** maintains the interpretive activities of readers, rather than the author's intention or the text's structure. It is not a text but it is the reader who creates meaning towards the text in reading process. (Bleich, 1978)
2. **Response** is "a spoken or written answer" or "a reaction to something that has happened or been said" (Wehmeier, 2005, p.1245). In line with this, this study specifies response as readers' response on Jeff Kinney's novel "*The Diary of A Wimpy Kid*" as their understanding on content, their feeling, their reaction and their comment on the story.
3. **Young Adult Literature** is created especially for young adults, hoping to give them more mature understanding of self and the world (Jenkins, 1999).

1.8 Organization of Study

This paper is organized into five chapters.

First chapter discusses the introduction. It provides the information on the background of study, research questions, aims of study, scope of study, research methodology, significance of study, clarification of key terms and organization of study.

Second chapter discusses the theoretical foundation. It consists of Reader Response Theory, Langer's Making Meaning (1991), Garrison and Hynds (1991) Readers' categorization, Reading Literary Work, Young Adult Literature, and Previous Studies.

The third chapter discusses the methodology of the study. It consists of reserach design, technique to collect the data, subject of the study, data analysis and synopsis.

The fourth chapter provides the report of the study. It discussed findings and discussion of the data.

The fifth chapter discusses conclusions and recomendations. This last chapter contains the interpretation toward the result of research in form of conclusions and recomendatiois in accordance with this study.